

# Uncle Sam's Champion Juvenile Corn Growers

BY WALDON FAWCETT

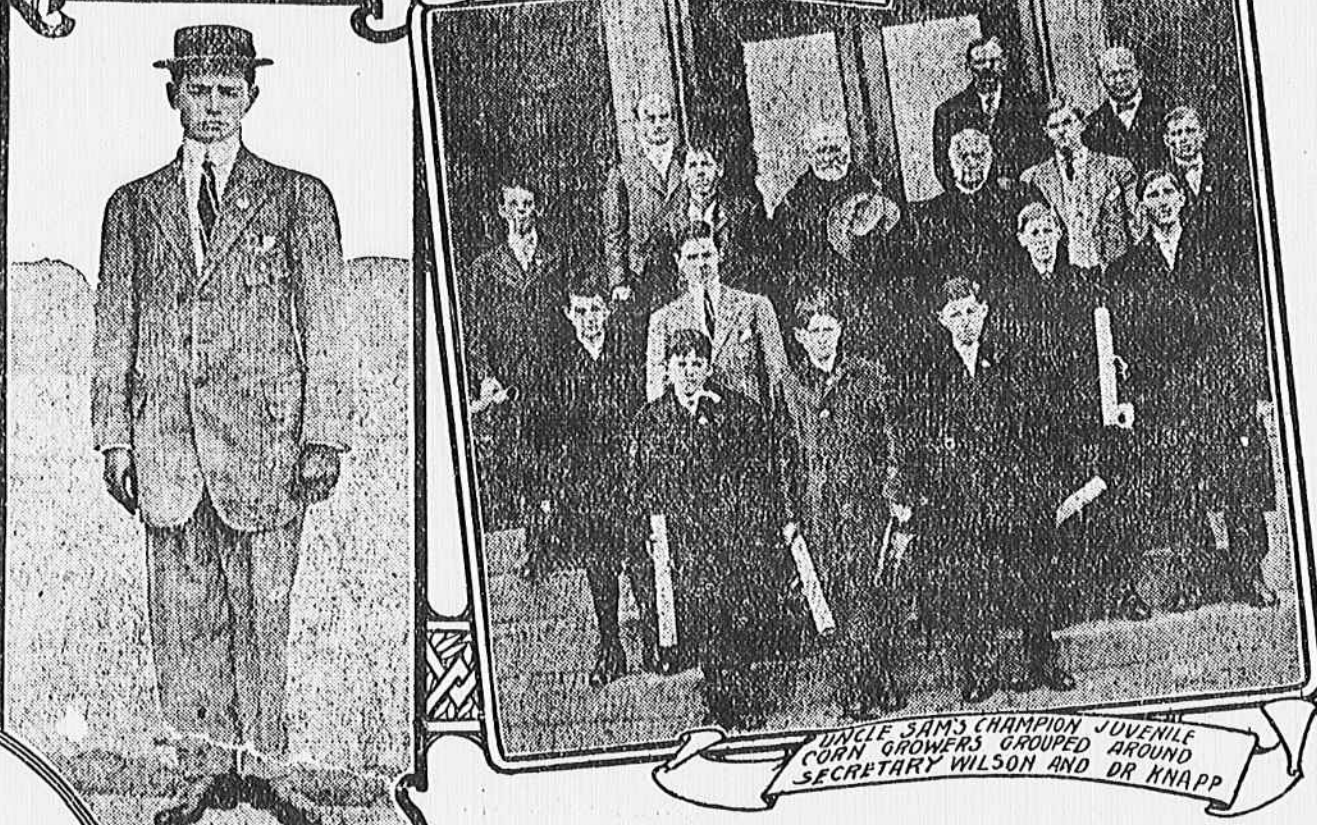
THE United States government is now at work upon one of the most ambitious and, by the by, one of the most interesting projects it has ever undertaken. It is nothing short of a scheme for moving the "corn belt." Or perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a crusade for extending the "corn belt," for there is no desire to interfere with the growing of our greatest agricultural staple in that broad section of the country where corn has long been the principal standby of the farmer. The new plan of the department of agriculture—for of course that is the branch of our government machinery that has charge of this new activity—is simply in effect to make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before.

Although all the world has been gasping in astonishment these many years past at the bumper crops of corn this country turns out each year, the experts of the government some time since came to the conclusion that great as was the national corn yield it was not as big as it ought to be. Furthermore, they thought they foresaw a time when, with our rapidly growing population, the corn crop would not be any too big for our own American appetite and, of course, if that came to pass, we would lose more or less of our foreign trade, for a vast quantity of Yankee corn products now find their way to dinner tables overseas.

On the theory of a stitch in time the agricultural sharps proceeded to get busy over this impending problem. First they set about increasing the yield of corn per acre and latterly they have entered upon the even more significant mission of extending the corn growing area. As our readers are aware most of the corn crop has been grown heretofore in the middle



THE NATIONAL PRIZE WINNERS



UNCLE SAM'S CHAMPION JUVENILE CORN GROWERS GROUPED AROUND SECRETARY WILSON AND DR. KNAPP



AMERICA'S MOST ECONOMICAL CORN GROWER STEVE HENRY OF LOUISIANA

west—in states such as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Nebraska. But the government experts scouting around soon came to the conclusion that as good or better corn than America had ever known could be raised in prolific quantity in the south if only the people south of Mason and Dixon's line could be aroused to the possibilities lying dormant at their doors.

Waking up these southern farmers to their neglected opportunities is the present work of one of the most efficient organizations in Uncle Sam's agricultural corps. It was nothing short of an inspiration that the experts hit upon the plan of proving that their corn "fairy tales" could come true through the medium of the farmer boys of the south. The lads were enlisted in this country wide "demonstration work" and 46,000 of them have lately been giving their fathers object lessons right at home. What is more, many of the fathers have taken the lessons to heart and after seeing with their own eyes what phenomenal yields can be made if corn be cultivated as the "book chaps" at the agricultural department prescribe they have become converts to the new ideas and have announced that henceforth they will cultivate corn the way their sons have been doing these past few months. It will mean only a fraction more time and work and it means production doubled or trebled or quadrupled.

Of course the government gave instructions to these lads as to how to till the soil in the most advantageous manner, but the enthusiasm which resulted in corn harvests that have made the whole world sit up and take notice was inspired by competitive contests for the winners in which all sorts of prizes were offered—township prizes, village prizes, county prizes, state prizes, and goodness knows what, all in the way of trophies culminating in each state in a "grand prize" in the form of a sightseeing trip to Washington, all expenses paid, for one boy. Of course, the government did not offer these prizes. Uncle Sam has no money available for such purposes, but the department of agriculture engineered the whole scheme and got the public-spirited citizens of more than a dozen states so interested that they put up the prizes mentioned. Individuals such as bankers and merchants and organizations such as boards of trade, county superintendents of education, chambers of commerce, etc., contributed to the list of prizes which in the grand total footed up to more than \$40,000.

This whole movement, alike to other similar educational crusades, has been under the direction of the division of farmers' co-operative demonstration work of the department of agriculture and the field officers of this institution have brought about systematic effort on the part of the youthful corn growers by organizing what

are known as corn clubs. There are great numbers of township clubs all over the land—the township being the standard unit of organization—and there are county clubs in about 600 different counties. Circulars of instruction, prepared by Dr. S. A. Knapp, the government expert, who is the Solomon of this movement, are prepared and sent several times during the year to each individual boy who is enrolled in this work.

Seed selection and the preparation of the soil are taken up first in these courses of instruction by mail (supplemented by the advice of the field workers of the department who are continually traveling about to supervise and give practical instruction.) All the boys who won the biggest prizes paid very careful attention to the instructions on this score and plowed their acres from eight to sixteen inches deep and thoroughly pulverized their seed beds. Even more careful advice is given the boys on the very vital subject of fertilization and one reason why so many of these lads have at the first go off gotten better corn crops than their fathers have ever been able to produce with all their experience back of them is that the youngsters have none of the contempt of the old fogies for new-fangled ideas and have been not only willing but eager to master a general knowledge of nitrogen, potash, phosphorus, etc., as agricultural aids and the effect of leaves, wood mold, barnyard manure, etc.

The whole plan of computing and comparing yields in this country-wide corn-growing competition is done in the most systematic and business-like manner. With swarms of keenly interested boys watching each other's crops like hawks there is not much opportunity for deception of any kind, but in addition to this insurance of publicity of methods and yields the department of agriculture has its own officers in the field all the while and they rigidly investigate any suspicious reports just as the field workers of the United States census have been probing into the enumeration in any town or city that seemed to show an undue increase in population since the last census. Be it said to the credit of the boy corn growers that almost none of them have fallen under suspicion on any score.

In making up the records of the young corn growers and awarding the prizes that are offered the government officials take into consideration other things than the mere crop yield, regardless of cost of cultivation and every other factor. Indeed, in making awards there are considered in addition to yield, the cost per bushel, the best ten ears of corn raised and the written history of the crop prepared by the boy who raised it. Not all the boys who won the big prizes and were personally congratulated by President Taft in the White House at Washington made the largest yields in their states. The economical side was always taken into consideration in giving out the prizes and in apportioning the diplomas of merit which Secretary Wilson personally presented to the boys who called on him at Washington.

The boys who have won rank as Uncle Sam's champion corn growers in every instance "made good" by exhibiting their prize products at their respective county fairs where their neighbors could see with their own eyes what they accomplished by the new method of tilling the soil. In many counties the distribution of the county prizes for corn growing was made a red-letter event this past autumn and as many as 1,000 to 1,500 persons have assembled at a county seat

to see prizes awarded to lads who are pointing the way to increased averages of corn production in the south, and incidentally to a partial solution of the increased cost of living. And no old-time farmer can sneer that the showings made in this twentieth-century corn growing are spurts of no practical significance. On the contrary the government officials have applied modern bookkeeping methods to the business side of the proposition and the reported costs of production can be accepted as fair actual costs.

The yields made during the past season by these young corn growers have been truly astonishing and some of them are almost past the belief of farmers who have been getting an average of, say, 32 to 40 bushels of corn per acre in choice corn country in the middle west. In one Mississippi county 48 boys averaged 92 bushels per acre. In one South Carolina county 20 boys produced 1,700 bushels of corn on 20 acres. In another county in that same state 142 boys averaged 62 bushels per acre. One lad made \$1,000 from a single acre of corn. Jerry Moore of Winona, S. C., the champion corn grower of the world, got the amazing yield of 228 bushels to the acre. Steve Henry of Louisiana carried off the highest honors for economical farming, producing on his acre nearly 140 bushels at a cost of only 13 cents per bushel. Joe Stone of Georgia, youngest and smallest of the national prize winners, is only eleven years of age, but he produced 102 bushels to the acre at a cost of 29 cents per bushel. Next season the scope of the corn-growing competition is to be greatly extended and the government may also strive to get the country girls of the United States into a similar competition, only, of course, it will not be corn growing but vegetable gardening with canning and preserving as a "side line."

## Those Church Suppers!

Church sales, dinners, teas and the like are not only means for promoting social enjoyment and incidentally of replenishing the treasuries of the organizations which provide them. These functions serve a real and valuable economic purpose, as is indicated by the lady whom Edna K. Wooley quotes in the Toledo Blade. "This lady, weary of the work of providing three meals a day for her family, consisting of herself, her husband and her daughter, finds a new joy in living at this time of year, and explains why: 'Last night we went to a roast beef dinner. Tonight we are going to a Methodist progressive supper. My husband hates those progressive suppers, because we start with soup at the church, you know, then go to some house for the meat course and finish up at some other house for the dessert. He says when he sits down to a meal he likes to finish the job on the spot, instead of getting up every little while, putting on his hat and coat and galloping out into the cold and cruel world to resume his eats at some other stand. But I think it's fun. It's a blessed change. Tomorrow night we go to a Presbyterian church supper. That's only 25 cents, too, and I don't see how they do it for the money. The next one after that is an Episcopal turkey supper, and the next is also a turkey supper at the Unitarian church. Then come the Disciple and Congregational church suppers, and by that time you'll see my cheeks sticking out with rich living. What would we poor home cooks do if it wasn't for the church suppers? They give us a rest from the eternal routine of planning and cooking the daily meals. Nobody that hasn't tried that three-meal-a-day business knows what a grind it gets to be. I don't believe there's a man on earth would stand for it.'

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Merchant—Then I'll take only the good-will.—Flegende Blaetter.

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